

# Combat Veteran Fact Sheet

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## Introduction

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides cost-free health care services and nursing home care for conditions possibly related to military service to veterans with combat service after November 11, 1998 for a period of 2 years beginning on the date of their separation from active military service.

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## Who's eligible

Veterans, including activated Reservists and National Guard members, are eligible if they served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Gulf War or in combat against a hostile force during a period of "hostilities" after November 11, 1998 and have been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

Public Law 105-368 [Title 38 USC 1710(d)(D)] authorizes VA to provide combat veterans cost-free care for conditions potentially related to their combat service for up to two years following their discharge or release from active duty. These veterans will be enrolled into Enrollment Priority Group 6 if not otherwise qualified for a higher enrollment priority group assignment. VA provides full access to the Medical Benefits Package by virtue of this enrollment status. Also, veterans who enroll with VA under this authority will retain enrollment eligibility even after their two-year post discharge period ends under current enrollment policies.

For those veterans who do not enroll with VA during this post two-year discharge period, eligibility for enrollment and subsequent care is based on other factors such as a compensable service connection rating, VA pension status, catastrophic disability determination or the veteran's financial circumstances.

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## What's meant by "hostilities"

"Hostilities" is defined as conflict in which Armed Forces members are subjected to the danger comparable to that faced in a period of war. For purposes of establishing this special eligibility VA accepts service documentation that reflects service in a combat theater, receipt of combat service medals and/or receipt of imminent danger or hostile fire pay or tax benefits.

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### Copays

Veterans who qualify under this special eligibility are not subject to copay requirements for conditions potentially related to their combat service. Unless otherwise exempted these veterans must either disclose their prior year household income or decline to provide their financial information and agree to make applicable copayments for care or services VA determines are clearly unrelated to their military service. This disclosure may provide additional benefits such as eligibility for travel reimbursement, cost-free medication and/or medical care for services unrelated to duty in the theater of combat operations.

The VA health care provider is responsible for determining if treatment is possibly related to the combat veteran's military service. In making this determination, the health care provider must consider that the following types of conditions are not ordinarily considered to be due to military service: (1) Congenital or developmental conditions, for example, scoliosis, (2) Conditions which are known to have existed before military service, and (3) Conditions have a specific and well-established cause and that began after military combat service.

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### Dental Care

Eligibility for VA dental benefits is based on very specific guidelines and differs significantly from eligibility requirements for medical care. Combat veterans may be authorized dental treatment as reasonably necessary for the one-time correction of dental conditions if:

- They served on active duty and were discharged or released from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable from a period of service not less than 90 days and
  - The certificate of discharge or release ***does not*** bear a certification that the veteran was provided, within the 90-day period immediately before the date of such discharge or release, a complete dental examination (including dental X-rays) and all appropriate dental service and treatment indicated by the examination to be needed and
  - Application for VA dental treatment is made within 90 days of discharge or release
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**To get  
additional  
information**

Additional information is available at the nearest VA medical facility. The telephone number can be found in the local telephone directory under the “U.S. Government” listings. Veterans can also call toll-free: 1-800-827-1000 or the Health Benefit Service Center at 1-877-222-8387. Veterans may also visit the VA health benefits website: [Health Eligibility Center](#)

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